

Both our species of Cormorants are found sparingly about the brackish lakes of this district; *Graculus sinensis*, the rarer of the two, frequents the Amblangodde Lake, a large sheet of water mentioned more than once in this paper.

*Note*.—Since commencing these notes, which have been much delayed owing to pressure of work, illness, and two changes of stations, I have added to my list of Raptores, by observing *Pandion haliaetus* as late as the 3rd of May making its way northward, and by procuring specimens of *Accipiter virgatus* in the low country fifteen miles from Galle. This latter is a rare species in Ceylon; and the Osprey has only, so far as I am aware, been seen once before in these parts.

In visiting a large tract of hill-forest, hitherto unexplored, lying in the subsidiary ranges of the Morowa-Korle group of mountains, and attaining a height of about 1700 feet, I found *Eulabes ptilogenys* as low down as 600 feet above the sea-level, and *Zosterops ceylonensis* as low as 1500 feet.

Galle, 10th May, 1873.

Nov 1875 273

#### IV.—*Notes on certain Birds of New Zealand.*

By Capt. F. W. HUTTON.

ALTHOUGH fully recognizing the value to ornithologists of Dr. Buller's handsome work on the birds of New Zealand, especially in his determination of *Thinornis rossii* as the young of *T. novæ-zealandiæ*, and in his identification of *Gallinago pusilla* with *G. aucklandica*, I wish to point out what I consider to be certain inaccuracies that I have noticed in it, and also to record my dissent from some of the opinions expressed therein.

I have in these notes followed Dr. Buller's nomenclature, but I do not agree with it in all cases.

##### SCELOGLAUX ALBIFACIES.

113 I cannot agree with Dr. Buller's remark that "the extinction of the native rat has been followed by the almost total disappearance of this singular bird," nor with the conclusion that he draws from it; for I have elsewhere pointed out (Trans. N. Z. Inst. v. p. 230) that there is no evidence that an indi-

genous rat ever existed in this country; and supposing even that there had been a "native rat," it could only have been exterminated by other rats and mice taking its place. There is also no evidence to show that the Laughing Owl was formerly "more plentiful than it now is," or that it has now almost totally disappeared. During a short tour of six weeks through the Nelson province last summer I twice heard it, once at Fox Hill, and again on the river Conway.

Besides its laugh it has a peculiar note, like two branches of a tree rubbing together, repeated twice over at considerable intervals.

Its laugh is very different from that of the bird that I heard on the Little Barrier Island (Trans. N. Z. Inst. i. p. 162), which I think must be of another species.

#### STRINGOPS HABROPTILUS.

Dr. Buller's mistake in supposing that the superficial analogy of the facial disk of this bird to that of an Owl, as well as the softness of its plumage, and its nocturnal habits, seem "to prove that it supplies in the grand scheme of nature the connecting link between the Owls and Parrots," has been already pointed out (Ann. Nat. Hist. 1872, p. 477), so that I have only to record my total dissent from Dr. Buller's views. Dr. Buller also states that this "bird is known to be a ground-feeder with a voracious appetite, and to subsist chiefly on mosses." That it may sometimes eat moss is probable; but I have tried in vain to induce it to do so in captivity, and one that escaped in a garden in Auckland remained for a fortnight in a clump of pine trees feeding on the flowers, and was never seen to descend to the ground. He also states that "there is no physiological reason why the Kakapo should not be as good a flier as any other Parrot." I should have thought that the small pectoral muscles, almost total absence of keel on the sternum, and soft primary feathers of the wing, were quite sufficient physiological reasons. 113

#### NESTOR OCCIDENTALIS.

I agree with Dr. Finsch that this species must be united with *N. meridionalis*. 115

## HETERALOCHA ACUTIROSTRIS.

114 The tongue of this bird is not, according to my observations, "bifurcate at the tip," nor is it "furnished with minute barbs," but is deeply fringed at the tip, and slightly so down each side for about a third of its length.

## HALCYON VAGANS.

115 I have never known an instance of this bird catching fish ; like the rest of the genus it subsists entirely on insects and crustaceans.

## PROSTHEMADERA NOVÆ-ZEALANDIÆ.

116 The bird described and figured as young must surely be a variety. I have seen several young specimens, but none of them had a white crescent on the throat.

## ANTHORNIS MELANURA.

117 Dr. Buller is certainly in error in saying that this bird is dying out all over New Zealand ; for it is one of the commonest of birds in the South Island, and can be seen in almost every garden. The district in which it is all but exterminated corresponds far better with the district thickly inhabited by Maoris than with the district thickly inhabited by *Mus decumanus*. I have never observed any bright-coloured feathers in its nest.

## ORTHONYX ALBICILLA.

118 I quite agree with Mr. Potts that this bird is by no means the representative in the north island of *O. ochrocephala*. The structure of its feet shows that it is not an *Orthonyx* at all ; and in its habits and song it is quite different from *O. ochrocephala*. According to my observations it does not prefer low bush, nor does it climb the boles of trees, but is almost always seen hopping about in the very topmost boughs of tall trees.

Dr. Buller is also mistaken in saying that it sings like the Canary. It is the Robin (*Miro longipes*) that sings like the Canary, while the song of the White-head (*O. (?) albicilla*) is much like that of the Yellow-hammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), but without the last note.



## CERTHIPARUS NOVÆ-ZEALANDIÆ.

Dr. Buller says that the egg of this bird is not known; but I described it in 1871 in my 'Catalogue of the Birds of New Zealand' from specimens that had been in the Otago Museum for several years.

## GERYGONE FLAVIVENTRIS.

In the figure given of this bird the breast is white, whereas it should be grey, while in the description of *G. albofrontata* the breast is described as grey when it should have been white.

I was in error in saying that this bird never uses spiders' nests in the construction of its nest. Dr. Powell informs me that the green spider's nest made use of is that of *Epeira verrucosa*. It is remarkable that *G. albofrontata* in the Chatham Islands uses the very same species of spider's nest as *G. flaviventris*, and neither ever employs the orange-coloured nest of *Epeira antipodiana*.

## XENICUS LONGIPES.

I cannot accept Dr. Buller's identification of this bird with *X. stokesii* without further proof. Dr. Buller obtained specimens of *X. stokesii* which he wrongly determined as *X. longipes*; in fact all the specimens of *X. longipes* in his collection were *X. stokesii*; these he compared with *X. stokesii* in the British Museum, and naturally found them identical. But until it is explained how it is that the figure and description of *X. longipes* in the 'Voyage of the Erebus and Terror' differ so much from specimens of *X. stokesii*, I must continue to regard them as two species.

Dr. Buller also states that this bird is strictly arboreal in its habits, never being seen on the ground. This is quite incorrect of *X. stokesii*, which is constantly on the ground, and never ascends into high trees.

## MIRO TRAVERSI.

I am not aware that I ever suggested to Dr. Buller that he should call this bird after Mr. H. Travers. The facts of the case are these:—When Mr. Travers's collection of Chatham-Island birds arrived at the museum, Dr. Hector handed it over to me, with instructions to make a list of them, describe

the new species, and pick out a set of the novelties to send to Dr. Buller. This I did, and described this bird as *Petroica traversi*; and, with Dr. Hector's consent, the list was sent for publication in 'The Ibis' (Ibis, 1872, p. 243) in order that Dr. Buller might avail himself of it in the preparation of his book. The birds sent to Dr. Buller had also my names attached to each. My list was published in 'The Ibis' in July 1872; and I have a letter from Dr. Buller saying that the Editor had sent him a proof of my paper before the part of his book containing *M. traversi* was published. I do not think this can be considered as a *suggestion* to Dr. Buller that *he* should name this species after Mr. H. Travers.

#### MYIOMOIRA MACROCEPHALA.

I am still not convinced that this species is identical with *M. dieffenbachii*. The bright yellow of the breast which characterizes the latter is seen in the young before it is fully fledged; and the difference cannot, therefore, be due to age or to season.

#### ANTHUS NOVÆ-ZEALANDIÆ

is not gregarious during the summer, disappearing on the approach of winter, but, like other *Anthi*, congregates in the autumn, after the breeding-season is over, and disperses to breed in the spring.

#### GLAUCOPIS CINEREA.

Dr. Buller has omitted to notice the habit this bird has of holding its food in its foot when eating. Mr. W. Travers has described this in *G. cinerea* (Trans. N. Z. Inst. iv. p. 212); and I have myself observed it in *G. wilsoni*. *Porphyrio melanotus* has the same habit.

#### CARPOPHAGA NOVÆ-ZEALANDIÆ.

In 'The Ibis' for July 1872, p. 246, I described two eggs supposed to belong to this bird, brought by Mr. H. Travers from the Chatham Islands. Mr. Travers has since informed me that he is not sure to what bird these eggs belong, as he found them on the ground, but supposed them to be those of the Pigeon, because in each case a Pigeon was sitting in a tree

above (!). The colour, however, and small size are sufficient proofs that they cannot belong to *C. novæ-zealandiæ*; and when Mr. Potts saw them he at once recognized them as the eggs of a Stormy Petrel. Both Mr. H. Travers and myself now believe that they belong to *Thalassidroma fragata*.

It is the more necessary that I should correct this mistake as Dr. Buller in his book (p. 160) states that the egg of *C. novæ-zealandiæ* is "1.5 inch in length by 1.1 in breadth; the surface is smooth without being glossy, and, as a rule, pure white, but sometimes marked with obscure purplish spots at the thicker end," and, although not given as a quotation, the measurements and latter part of this description must have been taken from my paper in 'The Ibis,' as they correspond entirely with it. The egg of this bird is still a desideratum in collections.

#### OCYDROMUS EARLI.

It is much to be regretted that Dr. Buller does not produce better evidence in support of his statement that this bird occasionally breeds with the Barn-door Fowl. It is certainly astonishing that a naturalist should see and "carefully examine" several supposed hybrids, and never preserve specimens, nor even take an intelligible description of them, nor ascertain what these supposed hybrids developed into. Dr. Buller cannot expect that other naturalists will accept as true a statement made in such a loose and unscientific manner.

#### OCYDROMUS AUSTRALIS.

The male bird described by Dr. Buller under this name is *O. troglodytes* (Gm.), while the female is the true *O. australis* (Sparrm.). These two species are quite distinct, as has been pointed out by Dr. Finsch in the 'Journal für Ornithologie,' May 1872, p. 174 &c. Another species of this genus has been lately received at the Colonial museum from Otago, which I shall shortly describe.

#### CHARADRIUS FULVUS.

Dr. Buller states that this bird "occurs occasionally on the New-Zealand coast;" but as both Mr. Gould and Dr. Jerdon



state that it resembles in habits the Golden Plover of Europe, this is very unlikely to be the case. He also makes no mention of the only specimen contained in any New-Zealand collection, viz. that in the Auckland Museum, which was presented by Dr. Buller himself, but without any mention of the locality.

ANARHYNCHUS FRONTALIS.

I cannot follow Mr. Potts and Dr. Buller in thinking that the bent bill of this bird is useful in enabling it "to follow up retreating insects by making the circuit of a water-worn stone with far greater ease than if it had been furnished with a straight beak." In the first place, unless the bird is also furnished with some means of seeing round a corner, it would not be able to see the insect it wanted to catch; in the second place, the bird is just as common in the sandy bed of the Waikato, and on the mud-flats of the Manukam harbour, where there are no stones, as it is in the shingle beds of the rivers of the south island; and, in the third place, I have often watched the bird feeding and never yet saw it run round a stone more than any other bird might do.

It seems to me that a bill bent on one side would be very useful to a bird whose usual food was either minute but numerous organisms, such as Diatomaceæ &c., or small animals hidden among fine algæ &c.; for by slightly inclining its head it could lay a considerable part of its bill flat on the ground, and thus, in the first case, take up a much larger quantity of those minute organisms at a time, or, in the latter, could search over a greater extent of algæ for creatures that it could not see, than if it used only the point of the bill. The broad bill of the Duck performs the same office in a different manner. I by no means assert, however, that this is the use of the peculiar shape of the bill; for I have had no opportunity of observing one through a telescope when feeding, neither have I examined the contents of the stomach to ascertain on what they feed; but it must be remembered that the curve in the bill would not prevent the bird from eating insects and other animals also.

## NYCTICORAX CALEDONICUS.

Dr. Buller says that several instances have been reported of this bird occurring in the south island; but both Dr. Haast and Mr. Fuller assure me that they never heard of it. The only authenticated New-Zealand specimen appears to be the one mentioned by Dr. Buller as having been shot in the province of Wellington sixteen years ago; but when I came to the Colonial museum I found two or three specimens, without labels, among the New-Zealand birds, and I somehow got the idea into my head that they had been obtained in the south island: this made me state, in my 'Catalogue of the Birds of New Zealand,' that the bird was found in both islands, a mistake which has probably led Dr. Buller astray.

## LARUS SCOPULINUS.

The young of this bird takes a year and a half to arrive at the full colours of the adult. When one year old they lose the brown feathers of the wings and back and assume the plumage of the adult; but the red bill and legs are not got until the second spring.

## LARUS BULLERI.

This bird is, no doubt, identical with *L. pomare*. It does not "deposit its eggs on the bare ground," but forms a very good nest.

## DIOMEDEA MELANOPHRYS.

Dr. Buller will find more information on the subject of Petrels flying at night in 'The Ibis' for 1867, p. 192.

## PELECANOIDES URINATRIX.

This bird flies very fairly; and it is quite incorrect to describe it as "a rapid fluttering movement along the surface of the water."

## PUFFINUS BREVICAUDUS.

This bird is not by any means abundant on our coasts; only one specimen has as yet been obtained, which was exhibited by Dr. Buller in the New-Zealand Exhibition of 1865. The nesting-places mentioned by Dr. Buller in the Kaimanawa ranges and in the Taupopatea country are no doubt those of *Procellaria parkinsoni*.



## PUFFINUS GAVIUS.

120 Dr. Buller gives *P. opisthomelas* (Coues) as a synonym of this species. In this he probably follows me, as he does not say that he has been able to compare it with any typical specimens. But this is another of my mistakes that he has unfortunately adopted without acknowledgment; for on a further examination I find that our bird always has the under tail-coverts pure white, while in *P. opisthomelas* most of them are fuliginous. *P. gavius* can hardly be said to "enjoy a wide oceanic range," when it has never yet been found out of sight of New Zealand.

## THALASSIDROMA FREGATA.

121 This species is far more plentiful in New Zealand than *T. melanogaster*.

## PROCELLARIA PARKINSONI

122 is common all round the New-Zealand coasts, and not by any means confined to the Hauraki Gulf as Dr. Buller would seem to imply. It breeds in the Rimutaka mountains near Wellington.

## DAPTION CAPENSIS.

123 I cannot agree with Dr. Buller that the history of this bird has been fully recorded when even its breeding-place is not yet known.

## PHALACROCORAX NOVÆ-HOLLANDIÆ.

124 This bird differs from European specimens in never getting so white on the head and neck; but this is not, in my opinion, sufficient to entitle it to rank as a distinct species. Dr. Buller, in his quotation from my catalogue, omits the first part of the sentence, in which I say that the change in my opinion about this bird was owing to my having visited the South Island.

## PHALACROCORAX BREVIROSTRIS.

125 According to Mr. H. Travers this bird is not found in the Chatham Islands.

## PHALACROCORAX PUNCTATUS.

126 The stage of plumage figured and described by Dr. Buller

